

Remains of Pioneer Children Moved From Jordanelle To Heber City

4 Oct 1989

Five small, rotted, wooden caskets, holding the remains of pioneer children, were tenderly removed from their graves near Highway 189, about ten miles northeast of Heber City, the morning of Sept. 27. What was left of the little bones, after more than a century beneath the ground, was transferred to a vault and laid to rest at the Heber City Cemetery later that afternoon, where they would be safe from the Jordanelle Reservoir that will flood their former burial ground with 90 feet of water.

Several descendents of William Henry Walker, a polygamist and the father of the children, gathered around the Walker cemetery plot, as Guy Olpin, Olpin Mortuary, and

some helpers used their hands to gently remove the last of the dirt around the coffins.

The following information was provided by Thelma Mahoney Anderson, granddaughter of Ada Louisa Mahoney Walker, Walker's second wife, in an article submitted to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation in 1979.

Three of the children died in one week, during the 1879 diphtheria epidemic. Murry Kimble, the son of William's second wife, Ada Louisa Phippen Hale Mahoney, died when he was four years old, on July 7. William's first wife, Lydia Ann, had bore the other two children, Sarah, who died on July 9, when she was five, and Josephine,

who died at seven on the 14th.

The Heber City undertaker was so afraid of being exposed to the disease that he met 19-year-old William Henry Walker, Jr. halfway between the city and the Walker ranch, to give him three coffins for the children.

Another of Ada Louisa's daughters, 4-year old Ada Eugene, died of burns after she used her apron to open the stove door and her clothing caught fire. She was laid to rest next to the other children in February, 1882. Three years later, Ada Louisa bore a stillborn daughter, Caroline, who was buried in the fifth casket.

A cedar tree was planted in the 10-foot by 20-foot cemetery, and

grew to shelter all the graves. The names of the children were on a board nailed to the tree, but it disappeared a few years ago. The little cemetery was enclosed in a pole fence, which could be seen from the highway.

William brought his two wives to the area in 1875 and built a log home for each of them, near where they eventually buried the children. William married Lydia in 1857 and had ten children with her. He married Ada in 1870 and they had seven children. Ada had been divorced from one husband and widowed by another, and brought three children with her, making a total of twenty children living in the two homes.



There is a new grave in the Heber City Cemetery, where the remains of five pioneer children are now buried. They were transferred from their former family cemetery, which will be underwater when the Jordanelle Reservoir fills.

S.S. to their environmental speeches, something like, "But the road should be safe, too," to shut Wasatch County mouths that keep annoying them with statistics about deaths and injuries.

What's a little ironic is that many of us who are transplants from large cities, want to be accepted as full fledged locals. We hated city life and sacrificed many big city advantages, because we wanted simpler lives at a slower pace. Some of us were even once counted among the "valuable" Wasatch Front people, and now yearn to be considered just one of the folks in Wasatch County, even if it does devalue our lives as far as people in our old stomping grounds are concerned. When we're counted among the local "hicks," we consider it a compliment.

One of the people working for *Entertainment Tonight* considered it incredible that construction on the Provo Canyon Road would be held up for decades, while people are killed and maimed, in order to protect the environment. "People are part of the environment, too!" he exclaimed. And he was appalled at a comment from a Sundance Resort employee who said, "I don't know why they're making all this fuss," referring to us "hicks" up here who keep losing people we love and getting maimed in that canyon.

What is neat is that nobody in Wasatch County ever accepted the implication that we aren't worthwhile; that no matter what other people imply about our value as people, or lack of it, we know we are as important and worth just as much as anybody else, and worth a lot more than many. We know who we are and we're proud of it, and that's important. But it's awfully nice when someone else recognizes it.

And now, finally, a lot of people do. A producer on one of the TV shows that's doing our story was told by a Sundance employee that the Provo Canyon Road controversy is old news and was asked why he was covering it at this late date. The producer answered that he just found out about it and that to him and the rest of the country it's fresh news. The fact is that it is current news, because the road is still, and will be for several more years, at best, a "war zone," threatening our lives every time we enter it.

Although a compromise has finally been reached for a four-lane highway through the canyon, there

Be
about water quality at the reservoir
if there aren't enough facilities to
take care of all the people that are
expected to recreate at the reservoir,
and that the responsibility for clean
water could fall back on the
County.

"When that project is finished, it should be adequate to take care of all of the proposals, and everything that has been suggested on the master plan," he said.

Lee McQuivey, the Bureau's assistant project manager in Provo, responded, "Our first objective is, of course, to take care of the health and safety of the people...Above that, it is to try to put in as many recreational amenities as there are needs for."

Besendorfer also told the Bureau that officials "talk out of both sides of their mouths" on the issues involved in the proposed Provo River Parkway, between Jordanelle and Deer Creek Reservoirs.

McQuivey said the Bureau has contracted the U. S. Forest Service



This is how it looked before Deer Creek Reservoir was built over it.

—Submitted by Art Whitehead